DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 142 520 SP 011 278

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TITLE College Teacher Training: Myth or Reality?
PUB DATE 76
NOTE 11p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Teachers; Educational Research; *Effective Teaching; *Professional Training; Student Evaluation of Teacher Performance; *Success Factors; Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS Queens College (City University of New York)

ABSTRACT

Research reported in this document supports the hypothesis that college instructors whose backgrounds include teacher preparation sequences would be evaluated by their students as more effective teachers than those whose backgrounds lack such preparation. Ninety-nine responses to a questionnaire submitted to full-time faculty of professorial rank at Queens College/City University of New York were divided into two categories--those professors who had undergone teacher preparation training and those who had not. Student ratings of instructors and courses, particularly the overall rating of the instructor, were examined, and ratings for each of the courses were averaged for each of the questionnaire respondents. T-test analysis of the data revealed a significant difference in favor of those teachers whose backgrounds included educational sequences. (MJB)

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COLLEGE TEACHER TRAINING: MYTH OR REALITY?

by

Michael W. Gamble

In a recent article Garner V. Walsh pointed out that teacher preparation, ". . .suffers from lack of direction and sparcity of evidence as to how a good teacher is developed and trained."[1] Far too many scholars and practitioners have noted that a consensus on what constitutes a prepared teacher has not been reached. This researcher believes that it is particularly significant that the relationship between teacher education training and teacher effectiveness has been one of the neglected areas of education research and theory building. A principal aspect of this neglect concerns the fact that the question, "How can college teachers best be trained to teach," has

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never been satisfactorily answered. While Ph.D. programs emphasize research and the scientific method, they rarely if ever provide candidates with instruction that will enable them to successfully teach in colleges and/or universities. For example, in a review of the literature, John Aquino points out, "It is amazing to find so little research devoted to the training of individuals to teach at the college level."[2] He goes on to lament, ". . .colleges and universities are glutted with teachers who have not been trained to teach."[3] Thus, although a potential college teacher is prepared to carry on scholarly research, it is questionable whether this same person is trained to present his or her material in the classroom effectively. In fact researchers note that there is no consistent relationship between the state of an individual's scholarship and his or her teaching effectiveness.[4]

This issue of teaching effectiveness is particularly relevant to concerned educators today. As greater numbers of underprepared students are accepted into our colleges and universities, we must begin to assess whether the faculty member is equipped with the skills and techniques that will permit him or her to accomplish requisite learning objectives. This is one reason student evaluation of teaching effectiveness has become an important part of college teacher evaluation. Frequently such abilities are

measured in part by asking students to evaluate teaching effectiveness of their instructors semiannually. The evaluation process has generated a significant amount of scholarly writing and research. One aspect of this research has been concerned with testing the validity of these student ratings. Walker, for example, demonstrated that there is no relationship between overall effectiveness ratings of instructors and the difficulty of the course itself.[5] Several other studies indicate little or no relationship between the grades a student receives and the course grade.[6] In fact, a number of studies specify that students give their highest ratings to teachers from whom they learn most.[7]

If student evaluations can be accepted as having some validity, then it is important that educators seek to determine what they can be used to reveal about an individual's preparation for college teaching. Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to examine if teacher preparation courses improve the classroom performance of college teachers as perceived by their students. It is noteworthy that although few teachers have been awarded Doctorate of Arts degrees which emphasize teacher training, many have taken teacher preparation courses as a part of their undergraduate programs. This

research investigated if college teachers who had received such training were perceived as significantly more effective educators than those who had not received such training. Based on the belief that the teacher who had been exposed and sensitized to the complexities of the instructional process would be the more effective, the following directional research hypothesis was formulated and tested: College instructors whose backgrounds include teacher preparation sequences will be evaluated by their students to perform more effectively in the classrcom than will the instructors whose backgrounds lack such preparation.

METHOD

Two-hundred thirty-five full time faculty members of Professoral rank were selected at random from the Faculty Roster of Queens College, City University of New York for the 1974-75 academic year. Data were collected by sending each of these faculty members a questionnaire asking if he or she had taken teacher preparation courses while an undergraduate student. Ninety-nine responses were received. Of these, forty-five Professors had received training in teaching methods and fifty-four had not.

During the Fall semester of 1975, Queens College students were asked to evaluate their courses and instructors. The results of these evaluations were published in April of 1976 in a pamphlet entitled, "Course and Faculty Evaluations: Queens College of C.U.N.Y., Fall 1975".[8] The Queens College rating sheet utilized a separate evaluation of courses and instructors. Question number twenty-seven was a summary question of the information given about the teacher. It asked the student, "What is your overall rating of your instructor?"[9] The possible student responses were scored Poor (0); Fair (1); Good (2); Very Good (3); and Excellent (4). The overall ratings for each instructor on question twenty-seven were recorded by course. The ratings for each of the courses taught during the Fall term, 1975, were averaged for each of the ninety-nine instructors who had answered the questionnaire. The data generated from these ratings were analyzed by a *t* test. The .05 level of significance was used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the contrasts involving *t* test comparisons of ratings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Means, Standard Deviation, and t Value on Evaluation Scores

	MEAN	SD	t
TRAINING	2.9311	.516	5.23*
NO TRAINING	2.4089	.579	

*$p < .05$

As can be seen in the table, there is a significant difference ($p < .05$, one tailed), in favor of those teachers whose training backgrounds included educational sequences. Thus, the study's hypothesis was confirmed.

The results of this investigation supported the prediction that instructors who received coursework in methods of teaching would be judged by their students to be more effective college teachers. This finding can be of benefit to educators and scholars alike. The data suggests that teacher training programs can be of value to aspiring college instructors. Indeed, Kenneth Eble, former director of the Project to Improve College Teaching of the American Association of University Professors and The Association of American Colleges, has raised the question, "What does work toward the Ph.D.

degree, the union card for college teachers, amount to?"[10] He suggests that graduate work prepares scholars, not teachers. To an extent this study has provided some support for his view in that it indicates that educators who had received no training in methods of teaching, were perceived by their students to be less effective in the classroom than their method trained counterparts. Thus, this research has shed some light on the training/effectiveness relationship. Quite simply, those with training in their backgrounds received significantly higher effectiveness ratings than those who had not. It is recognized that other factors may have influenced these results. Those teachers who had taken education sequences may have had a greater desire to teach than did those who did not elect to take such sequences. Such enthusiasm for the job of teaching may well be a factor to consider when evaluating the overall significance of the student's responses.

CONCLUSION

This study will hopefully stimulate further investigation of the teacher training/effectiveness relationship. Outcomes suggest that preservice and inservice college teachers should receive training in teaching methods.

This training should be directed at the teaching of today's college student. Eble contends that a serious consideration should be given to what beginning college and university teachers most need to know beyond their training in a subject. He notes, "Certainly this will include some knowledge about, and experience in teaching."[11] Such training can be included as a part of doctoral programs in every subject area. In addition, the need for inservice courses, or post graduate teaching seminars, appear to be indicated by the results of this study.

Since this study suggests that teacher preparation is a variable which must be taken into consideration, further research is needed to determine the content and extent of such training. It is also hoped that this study will stimulate additional investigations of the teacher training/student evaluation relationship for two year colleges, adult education programs, and other specialized academic environments.

Footnotes

[1]Garner V. Walsh, "One in Five Made Us Think," Improving College and University Teaching, 22 (Summer 1972).

[2]John Aquino, "The Preparation of College Teachers," Journal of Teacher Education, 25 (Spring 1975), 78.

[3]Ibid.

[4]J.B. Bresler, "Teaching Effectiveness and Government Awards," Science 160 (1968), 165-167; J. Harry and N.S. Goldner, "The Null Relationship Between Teaching and Research," Sociology of Education, 45 (1972), 47-60; A.S. Linsky and M.A. Straus, "Student Evaluations, Research Productivity, and Eminence of College Faculty," Journal of Higher Education, 40 (1975), 89-102.

[5]B.D. Walker, "Course Difficulty and Student Rating of Teaching," Improving College and University Teaching, 22 (Winter, 1972), 18,20.

[6]B. Caffrey, "Lack of Bias in Student Evaluation of Teachers," Proceedings of the 77th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, 1969, 641-642; D.J. Treffinger and J.F. Feldhusen, "Predicting Students' Ratings of Instruction," Proceedings of the 78th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, 1970, 621-622; V.W. Voeks and G.M. French, "Are Student Ratings of Teachers Affected by Grades?" Journal of Higher Education, 31 (1960), 330-334.

[7]S.A. Cohen, and W.G. Berger, "Dimensions of Students' Ratings of College Instructors Underlying Subsequent Achievement on Course Examinations," Proceedings of the 78th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, 1970, 605-606; P.W. Frey, "Student Ratings of Teaching: Validity of Several Rating Factors," Science, 182 (1973), 83-85; P.K. Gessner, "Evaluation of Instruction," Science, 182 (1973), 566-569.

[8]Queens College Academic Senate Course and Faculty Evaluation Committee, "Course and Faculty Evaluations: Queens College of CUNY, Fall 1975," Queens College Press, April, 1976.

[9]Ibid., vii.

[10]K.E. Eble, The Craft of Teaching: A Guide to Mastering the Professor's Art (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1976), 137.

[11]Ibid., 149.